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Kantipur Conclave 2026 starts today

Two-day event has 12 panel discussions besides keynote, other speeches.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, FEB 8

Kantipur Conclave 2026, which will bring together leading national and global voices onto a single platform, begins in the Capital on Monday.

The two-day flagship event of the Kantipur Media Group will see the participation of intellectuals, policymakers, Gen Z representatives, and civil society to debate the country's core challenges and explore shared solutions. It will also provide an international context to the latest events in Nepal.

The conclave will feature distinguished thinkers, political leaders, entrepreneurs, journalists and youth advocates from Nepal and abroad, with 52 speakers from 12 countries.

Following the inaugural session, Nobel laureate Shirin Ebadi will deliver the keynote address. Ebadi, known globally for her work on human rights, democracy, and civil liberties, is a highlight of the conclave. The first session, titled "From Protests to Possibilities," will feature speakers from Tunisia, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh sharing their experiences of transitional politics after popular uprisings.

In a session titled "Gen Z Revolt: The Story of a Shoe," Prakash Bohara will recount the personal and political story connected to his blood-stained shoe from New Baneshwar—a symbol widely associated with the movement. Political analyst CK Lal will then present "Revisiting Nepal's Revolution," offering a broad perspective on movements, achievements and limitations from 1951 to the present.

Another panel, "What's Funny about Politics? In Nepal, Almost Everything", will bring together comedians Adarsha Mishra, Sita Neupane, Sundar Khanal and Prabhat Lama to discuss the relationship between politics and satire. Another session, "The End of Ideology?" will feature a dialogue between political analyst Hari Sharma and politician Ghanshyam Bhusal on political structures, leadership and reform prospects.

The final session of Day I, "Rebuilding Economy, Restoring Confidence," has Nepal Rastra Bank Governor Bishwo Nath Poudel, FNCCI President Chandra Dhakal, CG Corp Global Managing Director Nirvana Chaudhary, Ncell CEO Michael Foley and Daraz Nepal Managing Director Aanchal Kunwar.

Day 2 opens with "Public Dialogue in the Age of Algorithms," examining the intersection of digital platforms and public discourse.

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Four runs short of history: Nepal push England to the brink

In a last-ball thriller, England edge Nepal in what would otherwise have been one of the biggest upsets in T20 World Cup's history.

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

Nepali batsmen Lokesh Bam (centre) and Karan KC pictured with England players after their match at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, Sunday.

NAYAK PAUDEL
KATHMANDU, FEB 8

By the afternoon on Sunday, Marine Drive had turned red and blue. The coastal district in Mumbai teemed with thousands of Nepali fans, donning the Rhinos' red-and-blue jersey. These fans, most of whom had come in from hundreds of miles away, were eager to witness Nepal taking on England at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup. In just a couple of hours, the underdogs would mount a challenge to the two-time T20 World Cup champions at the famous Wankhede Stadium.

By 3pm, the stadium had come alive with the Nepali fans, packing the stands and waving the triangular Nepali flag. Soon it became clear that the crowd would be hugely one-sided. There were cheers when Nepal took wickets and a deafening silence when they conceded boundaries.

For a see-saw contest through and through, the atmosphere at the stadium alternated between these two registers.

And when Nepal needed six runs off the last two deliveries to pull off an upset, everybody was on the edge of their seats. Lokesh Bam was on strike at 39 off 19, with Sam Curran defending 10 runs off the last over.

England had put up 184/7, as Nepal did reasonably well with the ball. Nepal reached 175/6 at the end of 19 overs thanks to Bam hitting two consecutive sixes off Jofra Archer in the 18th and two fours off Luke Wood in the 19th.

However, Nepal could not manage six runs in the last two deliveries. Bam was trying a maximum in both of the last two balls. He was sent back by Karan KC when he tried to take a single in the second-to-last ball. Had they run and KC hit a four in the last ball, the scenario would have been different.

"It is better to have a batsman who is hitting sixes at such a moment," Nandan Yadav said during the post-match conference when asked if the single should have been taken. "Karan dai can hit big, but he too felt that Lokesh was the best option then."

> South African great Steyn posts on X, 'Nepal I offer my services to you if you ever need em!'

Bam stayed not out at 39 off 20 as he could only manage a single in the last delivery. When he crossed the line, he was on his knees with his head down.

"Full credit to Nepal. They were outstanding everywhere," Will Jacks said in the post-match conference. When asked how he felt when Nepal needed 10 runs off the last over, he responded, "Very nervous. My heart was thumping. Sam did well to defend it."

Compared to the English batting order, 184/7 was well below their standards. Yet it still seemed comfortable given England's bowling options.

In the English inning, Jacob Bethell (55 off 35) and Harry Brook (53 off 32) departed after individual fifties, while a blistering knock by Will Jacks (39 off 18) at the end saw England cross the 180-run mark.

>> Continued on page 5

Daily bread beats ballot for Nepali youths on seasonal migration

Most say they would vote if they could, but missing work in India could cost them a year's income.

CHITRANGA THAPA
DHANGADHI, FEB 8

As campaigning intensifies in villages and towns across the country ahead of the House of Representatives elections scheduled for March 5, political parties and candidates are busy canvassing votes.

Yet at the border crossings in Sudurpaschim province, a different scene unfolds. Instead of election enthusiasm, men and women are hurrying across the Nepal-India border in search of work, unsure if they will return on election day to cast their ballots. At Gaddachauki border point in Kanchanpur district, groups of young men carrying small bags waited to cross, their concerns centred less on politics than on survival. For most of them the choice is not between candidates but between earning and staying unemployed at home.

"I wish I could vote before leaving. But everyone from the village is going now. If we don't reach on time, we may lose the work," said Sushil Chaudhary from ward 4 of Geruwa Rural Municipality in Bardiya who was travelling with five other youths to Mandi in India's Himachal Pradesh state.

"Farming work remains unfinished at home. Mustard plants are yet to be harvested and corn are yet to be sowed. But missing the construction season in India means losing crucial income for the whole year," Sushil said.

Sushil and his companions had returned home in the first week to celebrate Maghi (on January 15), the biggest festival of the Tharu community. But they were now heading back to India for daily wage labour on bridge construction sites. According to Subas Chaudhary, one of Sushil's friends in the group, more than 150 Nepalis from Dhukaniya and Shantipur settlements of their ward alone are working in Mandi.

"We earn between IRs 500 and 700 a day," he said.

> Police records at Gaddachauki show up to 160 Nepalis cross daily to work in India.

He and his friends plan to return home only during the paddy transplanting season in June-July.

For many migrant workers, the timing of the election has deepened a familiar dilemma. "We want to stay and vote in our own village. But leaders have not created jobs here. If we could earn in Nepal, we wouldn't have to go to India or countries in the Gulf," lamented Sohanlal Chaudhary, also from ward 4 of Geruwa. He said that despite facing harsh working conditions and verbal abuse abroad, labour migration remained the only way to sustain household expenses.

>> Continued on page 2

How one woman's courage challenged Iran's mighty clerics

Ebadi has fought for human rights and women's freedom, from courts of Tehran to exile.

ANWESHAN ADHIKARI
KATHMANDU, FEB 8

Ali Shariati Mazinani, a prominent sociologist and Iranian revolutionary who specialised in the sociology of religion, once said, "Religion should wake people up, not put them to sleep." The revolution culminated in the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty on February 11, 1979.

Although students, workers, leftists, businesspeople and women all took part in the movement, owing to the narrow leadership of religious groups, the revolution failed to bring about the broad social transformation many had hoped for.

Religious factions led by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini sought to establish a state based on Islamic principles. They paid little attention to economic justice demanded by workers and small traders, the freedoms sought by women, or the good governance demanded by students and youth. Soon after the revolution, on May 5, 1979, they formed a paramilitary force known as the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

On April 1, 1979, a referendum abolished the secular monarchy and declared Iran an Islamic republic.

REUTERS

Shirin Ebadi pictured in 2023

Shirin Ebadi, who had served as the first woman president of Bench 24 of the Tehran City Court in 1975, experienced a major setback following the revolution. All female judges across Iran were demoted as the Islamic law did not permit women to serve as judges. Despite her qualifications and experience, Ebadi's talents were disregarded by the state.

As repression intensified ahead of the 2009 presidential election, Ebadi was in Spain and was unable to return to Iran.

Ebadi recalled the bitter experience, how the female judges were demoted and instructed to work as clerks in the very courts they had once headed. After protesting, they were transferred to the Department of Justice as legal experts. Ebadi soon resigned. Her resignation was accepted immediately. Later, while receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, she recalled that the Bar Association had been shut down after the revolution and that her application to practise law had initially been rejected.

Iran underwent profound upheaval after the revolution. On October 24, 1979, constitutional experts drafted a new constitution declaring sovereignty to rest with "God" while also providing for elected institutions such as the presidency and parliament. This hybrid system combining religious authority with limited democratic mechanisms was unprecedented. Many liberals and intellectuals doubted it would result in good governance.

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DISTRICT DIGEST

Six-year-old girl dies in elephant's attack

KANCHANPUR: A six-year-old girl was killed when a wild elephant attacked and dismantled her family home at Dhakka camp of displaced people in ward 6 of Laljhadi Rural Municipality, Kanchanpur, on Saturday night. The deceased has been identified as Rejina Saud. According to the District Police Office, the elephant emerging from Shuklaphanta National Park attacked while the family members were asleep. The deceased and her 55-year-old grandmother sustained injuries as they attempted to run away. "They were rushed to Nawajeevan Hospital in Dhangadhi where the girl succumbed to injuries," said Senior Superintendent of Police Khadak Bahadur Khatri. Around 600 people displaced while expanding Shuklaphanta National Park have been staying in Dhakka camp.

Over 100 fall sick after wedding feast

KHOTANG: Over 100 people were taken ill after attending a wedding feast at Diplung in ward 6 of Jantedhunga Rural Municipality of Khotang district. The incident occurred on Wednesday, with symptoms appearing from the next day. Kul Bahadur Paudel, chief of Khotang Health Office, said the cases were due to food poisoning. "They are showing symptoms of food poisoning, and treatment is ongoing," he said. The patients have been treated at three different locations. As their numbers began to decrease, the rural municipality's vice-chair Khem Bahadur Khadka said treatment has been centralised at Nigalbas Bhanjyang since Sunday morning. Patients reported fever, nausea and diarrhoea, appearing about 12 hours after the feast. Both the bride and groom were among those affected. Local health teams, including the rapid response team of the rural municipality, health office staff and elected representatives, have been deployed to treat the patients. As numbers grew, additional personnel from the health office were called in, Khadka said. Patients include locals as well as guests from Udayapur, Kathmandu and other areas.

Baglung section of Mid-Hill Highway in sorry state

BAGLUNG: The Baglung section of the Mid-Hill Highway remains in poor condition, with unfinished stretches, recurring landslides and pothole-ridden roads causing growing frustration among locals and travellers who rely on the route daily. The locals complain that despite years of construction and repeated repairs, the road has neither been properly completed nor maintained well. Along the stretch from Ghodabandhe in ward 5 of Kathekhola Rural Municipality towards Galkot, patchy blacktopping and damaged surfaces are common. At several landslide-prone locations, debris has yet to be cleared, leaving sections of the road risky for vehicles. "The road inside our municipality has become extremely difficult to travel on," said Tej Bahadur Thapa, ward 9 chair of Galkot Municipality. "People frequently question us during public hearings, but the municipality cannot invest its own budget as this is a national highway project, and the concerned authorities have not taken responsibility." In some areas damaged bends have made driving hazardous, while the road at Bhalumare on the border of wards 9 and 11 of Galkot Municipality has remained unrepaired for nearly two years. The highway now serves not only western Baglung but also travellers from Rukum, Rolpa, Jajarkot, Dolpa and Dailekh, leading to increased traffic pressure. Although construction began in 2011, delays attributed to contractor negligence and weak oversight have prolonged hardship for residents.

नाम थर सच्चाइएको बारे सुचना

Indian Army 6/11 Gorkha Rifles मा कार्यरत Army No.9425109M HAV Khem Raj Rai स्थाई ठेगाना ताप्लेजुङ जिल्ला याङवारक गा.पा वडा नं १ नाङखोल्याङ रहेको र मेरी श्रीमती Nirmala Limbu को नागरीकता प्रमाणपत्र नं. 50530 जिल्ला ताप्लेजुङ हाडदेवा २ रहेको छ। मैले बिबाह गरेपछी रेकर्ड 11 Gorkha Rifles मा रहेको Sheet Roll र 958 मा रेकर्ड अनुसार परिवर्तित नाम Nirmala Rai रहेको छ। निज Nirmala Rai र Nirmala Limbu एउटै भएको जानकारी गराउछु।

मोटरसाईकल हरायो

मिति २०८२/१०/२२ गते राती २१:०० बजे सूर्यविनायक न.पा. वडा नं. ०६ पाण्डु बजार भक्तपुरबाट बा.प्र. ०२ ०५० प ३७१६ नं. को 150 CC रातो कालो रङको पल्सर मोटरसाइकल हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभाबहरुले फोन ९८४५५३५२०४, वा नजिको प्रहरी चौकिमा बुझाई दिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु ।
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मोटरसाईकल हरायो

मिति २०८२/१०/०६ गते बेलुका २०:४५ बजे भक्तपुर जिल्ला म.थि.न.पा.-५ कमेरोटार सडक छेउमा पार्कि-बाट बा.प्र. ०२ ०५३ प ३८७२ नं. को 400 CC कालो रङको NS पल्सर मोटरसाइकल हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभाबहरुले फोन ९७०८८३७५१३, वा नजिको प्रहरी चौकिमा बुझाई दिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु ।
नाम: हुलास अटो क्राफ्ट
ऋणी: रुपन श्रेष्ठ
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मोटरसाईकल हरायो

मिति २०८२/१०/२० गते अं. २१:३० बजे का.जि. का.म.न.पा.-६, बौद्ध रामहिटी स्थित सडक किनारमा पार्किङबाट बा.प्र. ०२ ०५१ प ८८०८ नं. को 150 CC कालो रातो रङको पल्सर मोटरसाईकल हराएको हुँदा पाउनु हुने महानुभाबहरुले फोन ९८१८५७७४८६ वा नजिको प्रहरी चौकिमा बुझाई दिनु हुन अनुरोध गर्दछु ।
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इन्जिन नं. DHXPRD 71275
च्यसिस नं. MD2A11CX7RPD57709

Malnutrition ravages Sudurpaschim as politics ignores a silent crisis

A recent report shows 11.4 percent children under five years of age in Darchula, 9.6 percent in Bajura, 8.8 percent in Bajhang, 7.7 percent in Doti, and 6.8 percent in Achham suffer from severe stunting.

ARJUN POUDEL
KATHMANDU, FEB 8

Over one-third of children under five in Surma Rural Municipality in Bajhang have been found suffering from malnutrition, a recent Smart+ survey shows. The survey also found that 11.4 percent of children in the district suffer from severe stunting, which is the highest rate among nine districts of the Sudurpaschim province.

Experts say the crisis is worsening due to poverty, migration of working-age adults, and political neglect.

"Adult males have gone to India for work, and there isn't sufficient food to eat at home," Shiva Lal Bohara, chief of the Health Section of the rural municipality, told the Post over the phone from Bajhang. "Not only small children, their mothers are also malnourished."

Malnutrition has remained a silent crisis in Nepal. Severe acute malnutrition, the most extreme and visible form, requires urgent hospital care. Nutritionists, as well as public health experts say nutrition issues are linked not only to health but also to education, poverty, awareness and several other social factors. Despite this, nutrition has never been on the agenda of any political party, even during elections, which they say is very unfortunate.

"Health workers and health agencies alone cannot solve the nutrition problems affecting hundreds of thousands of children," said Dr Aruna Uprety, a public health expert. "It is largely a political issue, and without political will, these problems cannot be addressed permanently."

Earlier, Nepal had made significant progress in reducing severe forms of malnutrition among children under five. According to the Nepal Demographic Health Survey

> Without strong political commitment, malnutrition will keep rising, experts say.

(NDHS) report, stunting decreased from 57 percent in 2001 to 25 percent in 2022. Wasting, a debilitating condition that causes muscle and fat tissues to waste away among children under five, decreased from 11 percent in 2001 to eight percent in 2022.

In Bajhang, health workers say, most villages have only elderly people, women, and small children. Villagers do not take malnutrition seriously, as it is not a new problem.

"Forget about nutritious food. People from marginalised communities even struggle to fill their stomachs," said Bohara. "People tell us that we only ask them to eat nutritious foods, but do not ask why they cannot."

The new prevalence rates are notably higher than those reported in the Nepal Demographic Health Survey (NDHS)-2022, which shows a national average of stunting 25 percent, underweight 19 percent and eight percent wasting.

The NDHS-2022 report showed that the wasting rate of Sudurpaschim province was below 10 percent.

Experts say malnutrition is limited to Bajhang district. Across the province 25.3 percent of children are stunted and 25.5 percent are underweight. Both indicators point to acute undernutrition, according to the World Health Organisation classifications.

In Bajura district, 46.8 percent of children are stunted, including 37.2 percent with moderate stunting and 9.6 percent with severe stunting. In Baitadi 38.4 percent children have been found stunted, and 23.6 percent children moderately malnourished.

Health workers say they saw stunted and wasted children in almost every village. "Nutrition is a multisectoral issue. Health workers are doing their part, but health alone is not enough to solve the problem," said Bhanu Bhakta Joshi, chief of Health Office, Bajhang.

Nutritionists stress that without strong political will, malnutrition problems cannot be resolved.

"Nutrition is purely a political issue," said Dr Atul Upadhyay. "Without a strong political will and initiative, poverty cannot be eliminated, and without addressing poverty, malnutrition cannot be tackled properly. It is very unfortunate that no political party raises nutrition as an election agenda."

Experts say nutrition directly affects a country's development. Malnutrition impairs children's physical and mental growth, weakens intellectual capacity, limits productivity in adulthood, and increases vulnerability to certain diseases.

Children who remain malnourished without timely treatment are likely to become stunted and face a higher risk of multiple non-communicable diseases later in life. Children with severe acute malnutrition are 10 times more at risk of dying compared to healthy children, doctors say.

Malnutrition plays a major role in the under-five mortality rate, according to the nutrition section at the Family Welfare Division under the Department of Health Services.

When work calls, ballot can wait

POST PHOTO: CHITRANGA THAPA

Youths from Bardiya crossing the Gaddachauki checkpoint in Kanchanpur district on their way to India, last week.

>> Continued from page 1

For the past few months, the Armed Police Force (APF) has been maintaining records at border crossings in Kailali and Kanchanpur of those people travelling to India, particularly workers heading to distant destinations in search of employment. APF officials say the flow of labour migrants has increased in recent weeks despite the election fever gripping the country. APF records at the Gaddachauki check post show that between 130 and 160 Nepalis have been crossing the border daily this week to travel to Indian cities such as Delhi, Punjab, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, mostly for short-term labour work.

The number is even higher at Trinagar-Gauriphanta border in Kailali. According to officials stationed there, around 300 to 400 Nepalis cross daily in search of employment, while overall daily cross-border movement—including for shopping and medical visits—exceeds 2,000 people. Deepa Bista, counselor at Shanti Rehabilitation Home located near the Gauriphanta crossing, said the profile of migrants has also changed in recent years. "Earlier it was mostly men travelling alone. Now women and relatives are going together. When asked, they say they have been called by family members or are going for work in big Indian cities," she said.

Among those heading to Bengaluru on Thursday was Himal BK, a permanent resident of ward 8 in Gauriganga Municipality in Kailali, accompanied by a teenage relative. Like many others waiting at the border, he appeared more anxious about securing employment than about the election. "Work comes first," he said briefly before boarding a vehicle.

The migration of workers from western Nepal to India is neither new nor temporary. Labour migration to India has a history stretching back more than two centuries, with an estimated one to three million Nepalis working across various Indian cities, mostly in informal sectors such as construction, agriculture, security and hospitality business. These workers often lack formal contracts or social protection, making them vulnerable to exploitation.

Research and field reports have also shown that migration from Sudurpaschim, Karnali and Lumbini provinces is largely driven by poverty and limited local opportunities. In many communities of Sudurpaschim, a majority of households have at least one member who has worked in India at some point, highlighting how migration has become embedded in local survival strategies rather than a pathway to economic mobility.

Global voices at Kantipur conclave

>> Continued from page 1

Panellists include AI scientist Dovan Rai, Barakhari editor-in-chief Prateek Pradhan, Pathao Nepal Managing Director Asimman Singh Basnyat and political figure Nisha Adhikari. A "People's Panel" will feature medical entrepreneur and activist Durga Prasai, political commentator Rishi Dhamala, Khushbu Oli and journalist Santosh Deuja, focusing on how non-traditional voices have entered mainstream debate.

The session "Nepal in Multipolar Crosshairs " will bring experts from China, India and the US to discuss Nepal's geopolitical situation. Panellists include Gao Liang of Sichuan University's Nepal Centre, Indian researcher Sneha Kumcha, Pacific Forum regional director Robert York and CNAS executive director Mrigendra Karki.

In "New Voices of Republic," Gen Z activists Raksya Bam, Majid Ansari, Pradeep Gyawali and youth leader Ajay Kushwaha will debate youth leadership, legitimacy and nation-building. This will be followed by a session featuring all seven provincial chief ministers who will debate "Federalism: Structure or Delivery Mechanism?"

The concluding session, "Policy, Leaders and Leadership," will feature youth leaders from major political streams discussing leadership transition and political culture. The panellists are Nepali Congress General Secretary Pradeep Paudel, UML Deputy General Secretary Yogesh Bhattarai and former minister Sumana Shrestha.

Congress issues poll directives for cadres

Other major parties have not circulated separate guidelines for workers.

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU, FEB 8

The Nepali Congress has ramped up poll preparations by endorsing an election mobilisation directive while other major political parties say the Election Commission's code itself is sufficient. Yet others suggest they will introduce similar internal guidelines for the March 5 vote.

A virtual meeting of the Congress Central Working Committee on Sunday approved the election mobilisation directive, which instructs leaders and members to work from their assigned areas.

Clause 21 of the directive calls for a campaign commitment titled "My 21 days for the March 5 general election", under which party members are expected to be actively engaged in canvassing for votes from February 13 to March 5, under the principle, 'Serve where you are assigned."

The directive also states that representatives deployed to the federal, provincial, district, and House or Representatives constituency levels must return to their respective districts, constituencies, municipalities, and wards after completing their assigned responsibilities and remain focused on local campaigning.

Except for those formally assigned duties elsewhere, all party office bearers and members across organisational levels have been instructed to concentrate their efforts within their own areas.

A party publishing its election mobilisation directives is unprecedented, said Congress central office member Dinesh Thapa Magar. Should there be any violation of the directives by the party candidates during campaigns, the disciplinary committee will take action against them, Magar added.

But the election code or directives of any political parties seldom get implemented, said Bikal Shrestha of the National Election Observation Committee. It is not that political parties do not follow such conduct but there are a lot of cases of their breaches, Shrestha said.

"As observers, we keep monitoring the election and have found that political parties breach such codes most of the time," Shrestha said.

The Congress, in its directives, has highlighted three main issues, stressing that the election arena is not a battleground of enmity, but a grand democratic exercise of ideas and leadership.

The Nepali Congress has adopted a policy of making fair and constructive remarks about rival parties and their candidates. The party has instructed its candidates and campaigners to refrain from hateful, provocative, or inflammatory expressions.

On the other hand, the CPN-UML says it has no intention of issuing directives separately.

"Our party candidates will follow the code of conduct [enforced by the Election Commission]," said Min Bahadur Shahi, head of the UML publicity department.

Congress Vice-president Pushpa Bhusal argues that the code of conduct set by the commission is different from the party's campaign directives. The Election Commission's code of conduct is mandatory for all political parties and candidates to follow.

"The party also has various campaign committees across the country, which the Election Commission's code of conduct does not regulate. In order to monitor all party committees and cadres during the campaign, the party introduced the election mobilisation directives," Bhusal said.

The Nepali Communist Party (NCP) has no election directives of its own for its candidates but its intra-party directive serves the purpose.

"During this election our main objective is to maintain economic transparency," said party spokesperson Agni Prasad Sapkota.

"Economic transparency during the election is one of the benchmarks of good governance, which our party candidates should follow. Making no big promises but sticking to workable policies is our main directive."

The woman who would not be silenced

>> Continued from page 1

Although liberals favoured engagement with the international community, many Iranians viewed religious leadership as a safeguard against foreign domination during the Cold War. In a referendum held on December 2 and 3, 1979, boycotted by opposition groups, nearly 99 percent of voters approved the new constitution.

The secular path initiated by Iran's 1906 constitution was effectively closed. Ayatollah Khomeini became Supreme Leader and appointed hardliners to the 12-member Guardian Council. A nominal presidency was retained largely to maintain international legitimacy. In 1980, Khomeini launched a "Cultural Revolution" aimed at eliminating dissent.

Universities were shut for nearly three years, books were banned, academics prosecuted and student protests violently suppressed. After Khomeini's death in June, 1989, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei assumed the role of Supreme Leader, a position he has held for more than three decades—underscoring how the 1979 revolution replaced one authoritarian system with another.

Shirin Ebadi was born on January 22, 1947, in the western Iranian city of Hamadan. Her family moved to Tehran when she was one year old. Her father, Mohammad Ali Ebadi, was a notary public and professor of commercial law. Ebadi has described her upbringing as liberal and recalls a warm relationship between her parents.

In her autobiography Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope, she writes of her mother's unrealised dream of studying medicine and the struggle she made. She writes, "My mother never wore the hijab. Her family was not narrow-minded enough to permit their daughters to wrap their heads. However, she was a witness to the modernisation journey and the ban on the hijab that Reza Shah initiated in 1936. It was not easy to centralise a country filled with villages and peasants overnight through railways and laws.

Reza knew this task would be impossible without the country's women. Therefore, he liberated women by banning the hijab, which was a symbol of the bonds of tradition. Reza was the first Iranian ruler to curtail the influence of the clerics and their political agenda over women's bodies. He was not the last."

She recalls her father's calm temperament and restraint, "My father was calm by nature, controlled his anger without fail, and could never be provoked into raising his voice. When upset or irritated, he paced the house with his hands behind him or methodically rolled a cigar, extracting tobacco from a silver case carefully, using the time to still his mind and raising his head only when he was fully composed."

As a child, Ebadi experienced firsthand the contrasting styles of Reza Shah and his son Mohammad Reza Shah.

She expresses no sympathy for Mohammad Reza Shah, who came to power after Britain and the Soviet Union forced Reza Shah's abdication in 1941. In 1953, with the backing of Britain's MI6 and the US Central Intelligence Agency, the Shah overthrew Prime Minister Mohammad Mossadegh after the latter nationalised the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Mossadegh was later imprisoned and confined to his village of Ahmadabad.

> In her memoir Iran Awakens, the Nobel laureate recalls the 1953 coup as a defining childhood moment.

Ebadi recalls the 1953 coup as a defining childhood moment in her memoir Iran Awakens. Mossadegh, she writes, was widely regarded as a nationalist hero capable of guiding Iran's ancient civilisation.

After earning a law degree from the University of Tehran in 1968, Ebadi became a judge the following year and later pursued doctoral studies under Professor Mahmoud Shehabi Khorasani from the University of Tehran. In 1975, she was appointed head of the Tehran court. She was married to Javad Tabassolian and had two daughters, Negar and Nargess.

Following the revolution, Ebadi left the judiciary and later opened a private law practice specialising in human rights. She defended victims of political repression, including Parvaneh and Dariush Forouhar, Zahra Bani Yaghoub, members of the Baha'i community, and students killed during protests.

In 2003, she represented the family of Zahra Kazemi, an Iranian-Canadian photojournalist who died in custody after being tortured in Tehran's Evin Prison. That same year, Ebadi became the first Muslim woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She used part of the prize money to establish the Centre for Human Rights Defenders.

Ebadi played a key role in launching the "One Million Signatures Campaign" in 2006 to challenge discriminatory laws against women. In 2008, Iranian authorities raided the centre, confiscated its assets and briefly detained her family members.

After travelling to Spain in 2009, Ebadi chose not to return to Iran due to intensifying repression. From exile, she has continued to support protests against disputed elections, economic hardship, fuel price hikes and compulsory hijab laws, particularly those sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini in 2022. Amini, was a 22-year-old Iranian woman whose death in police custody on September 16, 2022, ignited nationwide protests in Iran.

She has authored 13 books, including Iran Awakening: A Memoir of Revolution and Hope (2006), Until We Are Free: My fight for Human Rights in Iran (2016) and The Golden Cage: Three Brothers, Three Choices, One Destiny (2008)and more than 70 articles on human rights and continues to train activists worldwide. Ebadi has argued that corruption and authoritarianism lie at the heart of Iran's crises, noting the dramatic collapse of the national currency as evidence of systemic failure.

Iran's Reverse Path

Iran has not signed the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Women face severe legal restrictions, including compulsory hijab laws, barriers to employment, political participation and judicial roles, and a lack of protection from domestic and sexual violence.

Iran ranks 143rd out of 146 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2024 Global Gender Gap Report. Women hold only 14 of the 290 parliamentary seats, and child marriage remains legal, with thousands of girls married each year.

FOREX

US Dollar	145.36
Euro	171.77
Pound Sterling	197.89
Swiss Franc	187.38
Australian Dollar	101.99
Canadian Dollar	106.26
Singapore Dollar	114.35
Japanese Yen (10)	9.25
Chinese Yuan	20.95
Saudi Arab Riyal	38.76
Qatari Riyal	39.88
Thai Bhat	4.61
UAE Dhiram	39.58
Malaysian Ringit	36.82
Korean Won (100)	9.93

Exchange rates fixed by Nepal Rastra Bank

BULLION

PRICE PER TOLA

Fine Gold	Rs 300,500
Silver	Rs 5,010

SOURCE: FENEGOSIDA

BIZLINE

India, Malaysia pledge deeper semiconductor ties

PUTRAJAYA: India and Malaysia pledged Sunday to deepen their semiconductor partnership as the Indian Ocean neighbours ramp up trade and security links during a visit by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Modi touched down in Malaysia on Saturday, his first visit in more than a decade, where he inked a number of agreements with Malaysian counterpart Anwar Ibrahim, including deals on renewable energy, health care and artificial intelligence. "Along with AI and digital technologies, we will advance our partnership in semiconductors, health, and food security," Modi said. "This meeting and these exchanges are very vital, very strategic and critical to advance and enhance relations between India and Malaysia," Anwar added at a news conference in Malaysia's administrative capital Putrajaya. **(AFP)**

Tourist growth plan unveiled to revive international flights at Bhairahawa airport

Airport management and private sector join hands to boost foreign arrivals and sustain operations at Gautam Buddha International Airport.

DIPENDRA BADUWAL
BHAIRAHAWA, FEB 8

POST FILE PHOTO

Travel business owners say awareness about Lumbini and Gautam Buddha International Airport remains low in international markets.

A tourist growth plan has been introduced to ensure regular international flights at the underperforming Gautam Buddha International Airport in Bhairahawa, the gateway to the birthplace of the Buddha.

The airport administration, in coordination with the local private sector, has rolled out the plan with the objective of increasing foreign tourist arrivals to Nepal. Despite the launch of several international flights during nearly four years of operation, services from Bhairahawa have remained irregular due to a persistent shortage of passengers.

In response, airport management has intensified efforts to attract tourists, arguing that sustained growth in visitor numbers is the only way to secure regular international flight operations.

The plan has been developed in collaboration with industrialists, businesspeople, and tour and travel associations operating in Rupandehi and across Lumbini Province.

According to airport officials, once destinations in the region are effectively promoted and tourist inflows increase, airlines will be encouraged to operate regular international services on their own.

Shyam Kishor Sah, officiating general manager of Gautam Buddha International Airport, said the airport is working closely with the private sector to develop tour packages highlighting Nepal's key destinations, particularly Lumbini, and to promote them in India and other South Asian countries.

"To create an environment that attracts more tourists, we have been holding regular meetings with private-sector representatives over the past few weeks," Sah said, adding that the tourist growth plan aims squarely at ensuring sustained international flight operations.

As part of the initiative, tour and travel entrepreneurs in Rupandehi have been tasked with preparing organized tour packages covering destinations across Lumbini Province. Sah said the airport already has the necessary infrastructure, but tourism promotion has remained weak.

"Only when tourist numbers increase do issues of resources come into play," he said. "The airport and aircraft are there, but promotion has not been effective."

Sah noted that international airlines would begin operating regular flights from Bhairahawa once passenger numbers rise, which is why the new focus is on marketing tour packages abroad. He also pointed out that even Thai AirAsia's twice-weekly flights are struggling to fill seats.

Travel entrepreneur Chandra Thapa said demand from Bhairahawa for travel to Thailand is strong, but aircraft are returning nearly empty on the inbound leg.

"The challenge is to bring passengers from Thailand to Bhairahawa," Thapa said, noting that even Buddhist pilgrims from Thailand are currently entering Nepal via India. He stressed the need to promote Nepal's tourist destinations and Gautam Buddha International Airport in Thailand, adding that close coordination among the private sector in Rupandehi is essential. Tourism entrepreneur Sagar Adhikari said pressure campaigns carried out over the past two years to ensure airport operations have produced little result, making it necessary to strengthen local structures and focus on tourism promotion alongside lobbying state agencies.

"Tourists on the Buddhist circuit are seasonal," Adhikari said. "During the lean season, flight continuity must be ensured, even if it means sending representatives from Lumbini Province abroad. We need to unite for that."

JP Kandel, vice-president of the Chamber of Commerce of Lumbini Province, said awareness about Lumbini and Gautam Buddha International Airport remains low in international markets.

"Even foreign tour guides are often unaware that Lumbini is the birthplace of the Buddha," he said, underscoring the urgency of collective tourism promotion efforts by private-sector organisations. He also suggested that domestic airlines include promotional materials about Gautam Buddha International Airport in their onboard publications.

Thakur Kumar Shrestha, immediate past president of the Siddhartha Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said previous efforts to secure regular international flights had failed.

"Success is possible only through joint efforts by airport management and the private sector," he said, adding that launching inter-provincial domestic flights could also help boost passenger numbers in Bhairahawa. He further suggested engaging with authorities in India's Uttar Pradesh to create a more tourism-friendly environment.

Krishna Prasad Sharma, president of the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Lumbini Province, said responsibilities must be clearly divided among private-sector organisations to ensure airport operations.

"We need clarity on who does what and what kind of tour packages should be developed," Sharma said, noting that even retaining Thai AirAsia services has become a challenge. He added that a meeting of all private-sector bodies will be convened soon to assign roles and responsibilities.

Sah also said appreciation had been expressed to a Thai princess who visited Lumbini earlier this week for her support in efforts to regularise international flights.

The Thai royal family member had travelled to Lumbini via India and stayed at the Royal Thai Monastery, where she prayed at the Maya Devi Temple. After a one-day visit, she returned home on a chartered flight via Gautam Buddha International Airport.

Birgunj Metropolitan City
Integrated Water Supply and Sewerage Management Project
Project Implementation Unit
Birgunj, Parsa

Notice for Bid Submission Deadline

It is notified to all prospective bidders that the bid submission deadline for the following Tender has been further extended for 9 days as mentioned below.

Project Title: 55202-001: Integrated Water Supply and Sewerage Management (Sector) Project
Contract No. and Title: IWSSMP/Birgunj-CW01: Birgunj Water Supply System
Revised Bid Submission: 20 February 2026, 12:00 Noon, Nepal Standard Time (NST)

What's at stake for Indian agriculture in Us trade deal?

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
MUMBAI, FEB 8

Indian farmers have expressed concern that New Delhi has made too many concessions to Washington after the two countries brokered a new trade deal that would lower tariffs.

Under the terms of the deal that was laid out in a joint statement from both countries released on Saturday, India will "eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods" and other food and agricultural products.

Meanwhile, the US will apply a reciprocal tariff rate of 18 percent on goods from India, including textiles and apparel, leather and footwear, plastic and rubber, organic chemicals, and certain machinery, the joint statement added.

The terms were released after US President Donald Trump announced a trade deal with India, stating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had promised to halt Russian oil purchases. Modi lauded the new trade deal in a post on the social media platform X later on Saturday, saying it would open up opportunities and generate jobs.

But Indian farmer unions weren't convinced, calling the deal a "total surrender" to American agricultural giants.

"Indian industry, agriculture... are now under grave threat of cheap imports that will be dumped into Indian markets," the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), a coalition of multiple farmers' unions, said in a statement following the announcement.

The group also called on farmers to join a nationwide protest on February 12.

The joint statement states that India will "eliminate or reduce" tariffs on a "wide range of US food and agricultural products".

This includes tree nuts, some fresh fruit, soybean oil, wine, spirits and other "additional products" that were not specified.

Siraj Hussain, a former agriculture ministry top official, said Indian consumers were purchasing more nuts, "so its import may not have much impact on local production", and will help satisfy high demand.

Domestic growers do worry, however, about cheap imports on items such as apples, which they believe could have dire impacts on local producers.

"Import of fresh fruits such as apples... will ruin the farmers," SKM said. Officials hope safeguards included into the agreement—such as import quotas or minimum import prices for commodities including apples—will reduce the impact of foreign competition.

New Delhi's promise of lower duties on dried distillers' grains and red sorghum for animal feed could also reduce the need for local soybean meal.

Opposition lawmaker Jairam Ramesh said the move to ease imports of dried distillers' grains and soybean oil would hurt "millions of soybean farmers" in key Indian states such as Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. To stem concerns, India's Trade Minister Piyush Goyal reassured farmers that their interests would be safeguarded, adding that the key red lines that had been drawn by New Delhi had not been crossed.

He said "no concessions" had been extended in "sensitive areas" such as grains, spices, dairy, poultry, meat and several vegetables and fruits.

Syria, Saudis sign joint airline and telecoms deals

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
DAMASCUS, FEB 8

Syria and Saudi Arabia signed deals Saturday that include a joint airline and a $1-billion project to develop telecommunications, officials said, as Syria seeks to rebuild after years of war.

Saudi Arabia has been a major backer of Syria's Islamist authorities who took power after toppling longtime ruler Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

The new authorities in Damascus have worked to attract investment and have signed major agreements with several companies and governments, including Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states.

Syrian Investment Authority chief Talal al-Hilali announced a series of deals including "a low-cost Syrian-Saudi airline aimed at strengthening regional and international air links". The agreement also includes the development of a new international airport in Aleppo with a capacity of 12 million passengers, and redeveloping the existing facility, according to governor Azzam al-Gharib.

Hilali also announced an agreement for a project called SilkLink to develop Syria's "telecommunications infrastructure and digital connectivity".

Syrian Telecommunications Minister Abdulsalam Haykal told the signing ceremony that the project would be implemented "with an investment of around $1 billion".

For decades, Syria was unable to secure significant investments because of Assad-era sanctions. But the United States fully removed its remaining sanctions on Damascus late last year, paving the way for the full return of investments.

Government of Nepal
Ministry of Energy, Water Resources and Irrigation
Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC)
Tahachal, Kathmandu, Nepal
Tel: **+977-1-4598013/4598014**
Email: **info@aepc.gov.np**, Website: **www.aepc.gov.np**

Request for Expression of Interest (REoI) for Individual Consultant

Date of Notice Publication: **9 February 2026**
Country: Federal Democratic Republic of Nepal Project ID Number: P149239
World Bank SCF Grants Number: TF0A8382

1. The Government of Nepal has received financing from the World Bank towards the cost of the **Private Sector-Led Mini-Grid Energy Access Project (MGEAP)**, under the **Alternative Energy Promotion Centre (AEPC)**, and intends to apply part of the proceeds for the following consulting services:

Position	Contract ID (STEP Ref.) No.	No. of Position	Type of Position
Team Leader for Full Funding Proposal Development	NP-AEPC-20252601-CS-INDV	1	Intermittent
Results, M&E, and Environment and Social Safeguards Specialist	NP-AEPC-20252602-CS-INDV	1	Intermittent
Climate Finance Advisor & Economic and Financial Analyst	NP-AEPC-20252603-CS-INDV	1	Intermittent

2. The consulting services ("the Services") include support to the Project in carrying out the activities for the implementation of the Project.
3. The MGEAP now invites qualified and experienced individual consultants to express their interest in the positions, mentioned in the table above, to assist the AEPC in the preparation of the GCF Full Funding Proposal.
4. Detailed terms & conditions and the scope of services for specific consulting services are mentioned in the Terms of Reference (ToR), which can be obtained from the website: **www.aepc.gov.np.** The selection will be carried out based on the qualification and experience criteria mentioned in the respective ToR.
5. Interested individual applicants should provide the information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experiences to perform the services according to the ToR.
6. The attention of interested consultants is drawn to Section III, paragraphs 3.14, 3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, with updated edition ("Procurement Regulations"), setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.
7. A consultant will be selected in accordance with the Individual Consultant selection method set out in the Procurement Regulations.
8. Interested individual consultants are requested to submit their updated **Curriculum Vitae (CV)** along with a **Cover Letter** to the AEPC/MGEAP at the contact address given above or by mail, or by email to **info@aepc.gov.np** no later than **1 March 2026.**

OPINION

OUR VIEW

RSP under scrutiny

Quickly and publicly accepting its recent mistakes and taking corrective measures will be a sign of strength.

The Rastriya Swantra Party (RSP) is undeniably creating a buzz as the country inches closer to March 5 snap polls. All signs are that it is giving a tough time to traditional parties with decades-long histories and deep-rooted pan-Nepal organisations. The popular image it has built is based on promises of reform of the flawed political culture that the established parties have long practised. However, several activities of the four-year-old party in the run-up to the elections reveal a big gap between its rhetoric and actions. Candidate selection through primaries was a major differentiator for the RSP compared with the other parties where the leadership took the nominations as their prerogative. But this time, the RSP high command is facing allegations from the party rank and file that it is monopolising the selection process without internal competition, despite raising Rs25,000 from each aspirant for tickets.

It is also ahead in flouting election rules and the code of conduct. Openly violating a legal provision that allows a political party to replace the candidates from the closed list under the proportional representation system who opt out, the RSP included 38 new candidates. Legally, it could have inducted only two in place of those who withdrew from the closed list. Similarly, the largest number of candidates who have been asked to provide written clarifications for code-of-conduct violations are from the party, according to the Election Commission. Its senior leader and prime ministerial face, Balendra Shah, is the only candidate, so far, to have received the commission's letter for clarification twice.

People and especially youngsters look up to the RSP as it supposedly practices transparency and fair play. But the RSP leadership is trying to cover up the mistakes, arguing even its petty issues have been blown up as the party is in the limelight. But numbers maintained by the constitutional election body don't lie. The party should come out of the denial mode and take measures to correct its wrongs. Refusing to accept the wrongdoings puts it in the same category as the old parties it likes to deride. Yet it is still not too late. The election campaigns have just begun. There are miles to go before the vote. There is ample time for the RSP to demonstrate maturity and prove that it is actually the torchbearer of alternative politics.

The RSP might cash in on the anti-establishment wave in the upcoming polls, but without reforms in its political culture, its achievements could also be short-lived. To continue to win the public heart, it must be seen as different from the parties, not just in words but also in action. Whether the RSP wants to establish itself as a trustworthy political force in the long run will depend on how its actions unfold in the days to come. To restore credibility, it could, for instance, quickly and publicly accept its recent mistakes and take demonstrable corrective measures. Doing so would not be a sign of weakness; it would in fact be a show of confidence befitting a credible alternative force.

Balen, fire and fury

Pitted against Oli, his hallowed aura of invincibility is at the ballot's altar.

MOHAN GURAGAIN

POST FILE PHOTO

Balendra Shah, popularly known as Balen, wants to beat communists in their own game. In a lyrical tactic, Nepal's Marxist-Leninists drew the poor's attention with heartrending songs of poverty and inequality. Artistes like Raamesh Shrestha, JB Tuhure and Jivan Sharma have lived in Nepali hearts for decades for their timeless songs, such as 'Gai ta bandhyo', 'Aama didi bahini ho' and 'Simali chhaya ma basi', to name some of their most iconic numbers.

'Gai ta bandhyo' regained public attention after its inclusion in the hit Nepali movie *Balidan* in the 1990s. After Nepal became a republic, as an achievement of the revolutions aroused by such songs, Balen remade the piece, accompanied by a new video. By this time, the song had started mocking the very revolutionaries who fumbled at governance in their own political set-up. A thrust of this song, throughout, has been that 'there is nobody to speak for the poor'.

For the March parliamentary election, Balen is in the Jhapa-5 race, primarily against KP Oli, a prominent communist figure in Nepal. Oli is among the Jhapa Naxalite movement leaders who executed landlords in the eastern Tarai district in the 1970s to give the land to the tiller. He later spent much of the communist movement's time in jail, only to be freed when the banned Marxists and Congressis bolstered their campaigns against the partyless Panchayat system in the late 80s.

Oli had served as prime minister multiple times, until September's Gen Z revolt ousted him. Some portray him as a master manipulator of Nepali politics, putting him on par with the late Nepali Congress leader Girija Prasad Koirala. Another of his arch-rivals, Pushpa Kamal Dahal, the Maoist revolutionary who led an insurgency to an arguable success, isn't acknowledged as being so cunning, but was another person responsible for Oli's downfall.

Balen is a figure who emerged from the September fire, shining. Many try to link him to the Singha Durbar arson that ravaged the governing seat in Kathmandu. In an older Facebook post, Balen threatened to set the central secretariat on fire if the traffic police again stopped for checks any vehicle operated by the Kathmandu Metropolitan City Office that he led as mayor.

Dahal was an Oli comrade in the 2017 parliamentary elections, which installed strong communist governments both at the centre and in the provinces. The failures of their unified communist party to govern the country properly in the federal set-up, infighting during the Covid-19 pandemic—which compounded public hardship—and a series of government changes after the party split created space for youths such as Balen to venture into politics.

Balen had been campaigning for years when he stood for Kathmandu mayor in 2022. Rabi Lamichhane, a loudspeaking journalist who delivered his justice before television cameras, took a plunge into politics for the November parliamentary elections later that year.

Oli's mistakes gave rise to both these newcomers in politics. Balen's mayoral opponent from Oli's CPN-UML was the former Kathmandu metropolis chief Keshav Sthapit, who had lost track of the changing times. A young candidate like Sunita Dangol, who won the deputy mayor race with a huge margin, could have beaten Balen in the mayoral contest itself.

In the last election, Oli fielded candidates against Balen. This time around, Balen ran all the way to Jhapa to challenge Oli in his home ground.

Balen complements Lamichhane's angry-young-man figure of Nepali politics. Now in the latter's party, Balen is almost single-handedly driving the Rastriya Swatantra Party's electoral vehicle. The RSP is one of the parties on which Balen did not spare his social media whiplash as he collectively derided domestic forces and foreign powers at one swipe earlier. Balen's fury has now found greater manifestation.

A political movement preferably has a face. The Gen Z revolt was necessitated by the Oli government's social media ban, and some youths registered their intent with the administration to demonstrate peacefully against it. The September 8 killings of 19 youths in police firings triggered what became the biggest destruction of the Nepali state apparatus in the country's history. Balen's social media posts had become so potent by then that he could instruct the revolting youths on what to do next. To his bidding, the Nepali Army negotiated a way out for the nation lost in the cloud of Nepal's only urban revolt.

While Lamichhane came out of jail, allegedly hoping to lead a government in the revolt's aftermath, Balen turned down the youths' PM offer.

It's probably not in Balen's nerves to take the position that came so easily to him. Instead, he wants to earn it a harder way, beating another prime ministerial candidate—Oli from the UML—most immediately.

History has caught Oli helpless three times—while he languished in prison for 14 years with chronic illnesses, and then when he had to be flown out of Baluwatar on an army chopper. This time, he puts on a brave face despite the challenge Balen presents. But it's for the mighty people to decide if Balen or Oli should represent them.

Beating Oli alone won't enthrone Balen at Singha Durbar. The RSP under Lamichhane has to emerge as the biggest political party to make Balen the prime minister.

Balen toured the eastern hills, so as also to speak to his voters in Jhapa. His visits to far-western districts are an obvious move to bolster his PM prospects.

What exactly happens after March 5 is unknown, even to the individual voter, forget armchair analysts and self-appeasing politicians.

Which party can ride the electoral wave and which ones will be swept away will be seen in a matter of weeks from now. Balen's hallowed aura of invincibility is at the ballot's altar.

Portraying his party as the protagonist against the so-called destructive forces, Oli has been trying every trick in the book to delay the elections. As he grows increasingly jittery over potential defeat, Oli even tried electoral tie-ups with Dahal's coalition of leftist forces, to no avail. Dahal seemed to have a hand in inflaming the Gen Z movement and tried to cash in on it later, but is having to wade into the elections without an assured victory.

For his part, Balen rapped leaders of the old guard enough for their failures. Can he also provide a rocking rebuttal to allegations that he did not send fire engines in time to douse the Singha Durbar and Supreme Court fires?

The theory of revolution does not support Oli's repeated victory in Jhapa, but if he defies the odds, will Balen's fury hold the same fire?

Guragain is a desk editor at the Post.

MONDAY INTERVIEW RAM PRASAD BHANDARI

We cannot relax until the election is over

If the Election Commission becomes punitive in order to impose the code of conduct, the situation will not be pleasant for the parties or candidates.

There are now 24 days remaining until the snap polls scheduled for March 5 in the aftermath of the Gen Z protests. As Nepal approaches the critical date, the Election Commission remains busy with final-minute preparations for an election that has the potential to flip the political landscape of the country. However, the Commission continues to court controversy. The political parties and candidates have largely ignored the election code of conduct and guidelines of the commission regarding women's representation. There have also been reports of changes in the closed lists of candidates. A big roadblock to the elections also seems to be the weather, as doubts have been raised over the feasibility of holding the election in multiple phases.

The Post's **Biken K Dawadi** and **Rajesh Mishra** sat down for an interview with the acting chief election commissioner Ram Prasad Bhandari. Excerpts.

In what state do you currently find yourself—are you overwhelmed with an influx of work, or in a more relaxed state?

We are continuing with our standard daily operations. Regarding the context of election preparations, that work is largely complete. If you look at the Election Commission (EC) grounds now, the tents have already been pitched, and materials are being dispatched from the centres. We have finalised all preparations for the 14 types of materials distributed from the centre. Our District Election Officers and Provincial Election Officers have already procured 37 types of items locally, which are now stored in their respective warehouses. These items are currently being packaged and dispatched to the storage sites near the polling stations.

Regarding ballots, the printing for the Proportional Representation (PR) system is complete. For the first-past-the-post system, over 8 million ballots have been printed so far, with approximately 11 million remaining to be printed. Once the printing is finalised, we will transport these ballots.

What is the timeline for the delivery of these materials to the districts?

We will have dispatched all election materials to the relevant election offices by February 19. Once the polling officers are appointed, they will take custody of these materials and begin their journey to the designated polling stations and centres. The election staff, security personnel and representatives involved in the electoral process will reach their respective stations early to complete all necessary arrangements so that we are prepared and at ease for March 5.

As of today, tasks have been decentralised and moved to the local levels. The chief election officers, election officers, and polling officers are now in charge. The chief election officers are judges, while the election officers are Under-Secretaries from the legal sector. Manpower management is being handled at the district level, and these officers will be deployed to their respective locations immediately.

Does this imply that the EC is currently in a more relaxed position?

One cannot be truly relaxed until the election is successfully concluded. However, the workload is significantly less now because we have cleared many of the major hurdles and established a rhythm. Therefore, regarding election materials and general preparations, we are on track.

Recently, there has been a sudden resurgence of discussion on whether the election will be held in one phase or two. How does the commission view it?

The EC has never believed in phases from the very beginning. In the context of elections, various questions arise at every critical juncture. These questions remain alive until the election is completed, after which they burst and vanish like water bubbles. The commission has never uttered the words 'one phase', 'two phases', or 'three phases'. I have maintained from the start that the election will be held on the scheduled date of March 5, from 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

What do you see as the major challenges for the remaining 24 days and the counting period?

I don't see any major challenges now. Some wondered if the weather in the Himalayan regions would prevent the election. We wrote to the Department of Hydrology and Meteorology, and they provided a report today based on 30 years of analysis. They predict no natural disasters, snow or heavy rain on March 5. The weather will support the election.

Many hoped that out-of-constituency voting would be possible this time around. Why did it not happen?

Once an election date is announced, it is not permissible to change the laws or the technology related to the election. With the dissolution of the House of Representatives (HoR) after the Gen Z protests, we do not even have a functioning legislature at the moment.

Ram Prasad Bhandari, acting chief election commissioner

POST PHOTO: DEEPAK KC

President Ramchandra Paudel stated that this action was taken to save the constitution. Whether it was the revolution of 1951, the movement of 1990, or the people's movement of 2006, those movements discarded and tore up the old constitutions. However, even after weathering the Gen Z uprising, the constitution has remained alive; it has not been torn or discarded. We must conduct the election within its boundaries. Therefore, after the election date is declared, election-related acts, rules and laws cannot be amended. Without such amendments, the current law cannot accommodate voters abroad or out-of-constituency voting.

Is this also why the 'None of the Above' (NOTA) option could not be implemented?

Yes, the situation is the same for NOTA. Many suggest that we simply need to add one more box to the ballot paper, but adding that box requires constitutional backing. It is not like simply adding a room at an airport; it requires a formal amendment. At this stage, it is not possible.

We have seen a blatant disregard for the election code of conduct by parties and candidates. Recently, former chief election commissioner Bhojraj Pokharel slammed the EC for the lack of political will to book the offenders. Why is no action being taken?

The Code of Conduct is always issued during elections, and parties often find it difficult to follow. When violations occur, the leadership tries to escape responsibility by blaming others. However, we will now have zero tolerance for such violations.

A Central Monitoring Committee has been formed under the coordination of an election commissioner. Below that, there are district-level monitoring committees, as well as committees at the provincial and municipal levels. Furthermore, we have a process for subtle monitoring at various checkpoints. The EC will also appoint various other monitoring officers to ensure compliance.

If a violation is proven, the nomination of the candidate can be cancelled even after the election is completed. As we have been clear about this from the start, I believe parties and leaders are being more cautious this time. The 'dos' and 'don'ts' are explicitly stated for everyone to read. If the EC is forced to be punitive to ensure compliance, the situation will not be pleasant for the parties or candidates.

Regarding the PR component, were the closed lists illegally changed?

No, that is not the case. If there was a disciplinary action within a party, a breach of their internal order, or if the submitted schedule was not legally sound—meaning there was a legal error—the party has a chance to correct it. However, a change to the submitted list is not permitted under any circumstances.

Recent reports suggest that some areas remain highly sensitive. What strategy is being used to ensure a peaceful, free and fair election?

You must look at it this way: the commission's job is to conduct the election, while the government's job is to guarantee peace and security. The EC has independently categorised areas as high-risk, sensitive, or normal. Security agencies have also performed their assessments. We summoned the heads of security agencies here and asked if they could provide security, and they assured us of their capability.

Further, the Nepali people are very resilient. After September 8 and 9, people were frightened, wondering if another plume of smoke would appear in the sky. On October 16, even when the government and other agencies were unable to act, the EC called 40-45 parties for a discussion. We sat for eight hours, which allowed for the venting of pent-up frustrations. After that, the EC and the government initiated multiple efforts to bring stakeholders and civil society together. Each of these efforts has helped build a peaceful climate for elections.

Where did the ultimate assurance for this process come from?

It came from a comprehensive discussion held at the Office of the Prime Minister in Singha Durbar, involving the EC, political parties, civil society leaders and Gen Z representatives. Before that discussion, the atmosphere was murky regarding who would participate in the election. Spending three or four hours in that discussion cleared the atmosphere. Honestly, we had to struggle to create that environment, but we are now in this stable position because of it.

The EC had provided a guideline to the parties to achieve 33 percent women's representation even in direct election nominations, but it seems this was largely ignored. Are firmer steps needed?

Please understand the nuance here. Often, women leaders within parties do not speak up against it in their parties. Most of the older leaders have a specific mindset. The commission issued directives multiple times asking parties to field at least 33 percent women for direct seats. Instead, the parties fulfil the requirement through the PR and do not field women candidates. The commission's role is to issue directives; we do not have the authority to invalidate their nominations if parties don't follow through. It ultimately depends on the role of the top leadership of the political parties to follow these directives.

This election has seen the emergence of a significant alternative force. How does this differ from a normal election, and does it require different preparations?

The upcoming elections are snap ones, not a periodic one. Everyone, including myself as a referee, is a voter. Previously, even periodic elections didn't create much enthusiasm, but now nearly 900,000 new voters have been added for the snap election. The commission believes the new generation will be vigilant and ensure a clean, free and fair election.

Will the upcoming elections be the most 'informed' election to date?

Absolutely. We forecast that voter turnout will increase, and the percentage of invalid votes will decrease. People are more interested now. Between the EC's efforts and the parties' campaigns, voters have educated themselves at home on how to vote correctly so their ballots aren't invalidated.

Regarding social media usage, there are concerns about buying followers and fake interactions from bots to manipulate voters. How is the commission handling this?

I have repeatedly said that people must distinguish between right and wrong information on social media. If it is wrong, discard it. The EC is alert and has discussed with authorised agencies how to keep the election free from the misuse of social media. We are aware that platforms like TikTok can be misused. We have formed various committees and sub-committees to monitor and control this.

Is there any room for doubt left?

None at all. Even the Prime Minister, after visiting the Janak Education Materials Centre and seeing the mountains of printed ballots, remarked that only the people's stamps are left to be applied.

Can this election reflect the spirit of the Gen Z movement?

Yes. Elected representatives will capture that spirit and provide good governance. Only elected representatives can establish peace and order by representing the spirit of the Gen Z movement. Regarding minor issues, like the police spokesperson mentioning a gap of 1600 four-wheel vehicles, these are small problems that will be addressed during the election.

Read the full interview at kathmandupost.com

Nepal come agonisingly close to pulling off a major upset at T20 World Cup

POST PHOTO: HEMANTA SHRESTHA

Nepal fans cheer during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup group stage match between Nepal and England at Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, India on Sunday. England won the match by 4 runs.

>> Continued from page 1

Dipendra Singh Airee and Nandan Yadav picked two wickets each, while Sher Malla and Sandeep Lamichhane claimed one each.

Meanwhile, Malla was the one who gave the first relief to Nepal. On his debut ball for Nepal, that too in a World Cup match, Malla bagged the wicket of Phil Salt in his second over.

When it came Nepal's turn to bat, a good start by Kushal Bhurtel (29 off 17) followed by a 54-ball 82-run partnership for the third wicket between captain Rohit Kumar Paudel and vice-captain Dipendra Singh Airee had thousands of Nepali fans dreaming of a victory over a country where the game was invented.

Airee, who got caught out while trying to complete his 50 with a six, however, managed to create history. He hit a four and a six in the last two deliveries of the 14th over, which was bowled by Adil Rashid, to reach 44 off 28. And 44 runs against England helped Airee become the first Nepali player to reach 2,000 T20I runs.

Paudel departed at 39 off 34 while also trying to hit big. When the skipper departed, Nepal were at 126/4 at 15.3 overs.

The game looked out of hand when Aarif Sheikh (10 off 8) and Gulshan Kumar Jha (1 off 2) departed. But it was Bam who brought the Rhinos back in the chase against the Lions.

"I was waiting for a bad delivery by Sam Curran in the last over to hit it for a six, but it was not meant to be," Bam said. "The teammates said I played well, but I am personally disappointed."

It was also because of the fight Nepal showed against one of the most successful teams in T20Is of late that Nepali fans did not leave in disappointment. They waited until the Rhinos took a lap around the ground to thank them; in return, they showed similar gratitude and promise to fill Wankhede again for the upcoming games.

"Winning ugly is a good trade," Jacks said. "It was not as expected for us as the game went to the end."

Jacks also did not resist from praising Nepali players further.

"There was a slow ball by Archer, which Lokesh hit for a six. I said 'what a good shot'," said Jacks. "There were several moments today by Nepali batters where I said it was a good shot."

A similar praise came from England's captain Harry Brook during the post-match presentation. "It wasn't easy at all, thankfully we got over the line. They played extremely well, not many teams take Adil Rashid down the way they did," Brook said.

The two most expensive players for England with the ball were two of their most experienced bowlers—Rashid and Archer. Each gave away 42 runs in their four overs, while only Archer managed a wicket.

"Result-wise, it did not go our way, but effort-wise...," said Nepal's skipper Paudel in the post-match presentation. "It is hard for bowlers in death overs to bowl, especially Yorkers, those slow bouncers. Sam Curran bowled really well. But I think we will improve."

Dale Steyn wants to be part of Nepali cricket

While Nandan Yadav was seated for the post-match conference, a journalist informed the crowd of a post by South African great Dale Steyn on X.

"As soon as the match concluded between Nepal and England, Dale Steyn posted on X that he wanted to be part of Nepali cricket," he informed. He then asked Yadav, "What do you have to say on that?"

Steyn's post states, "Nepal I offer my services to you if you ever need em! Up, up and UP!"

Meanwhile, Yadav, unaware of the post by Steyn, said that it was big for Nepali cricket.

"He [Steyn] ruled cricket for 10 years," said Yadav. "we can approach him... the Cricket Association of Nepal (CAN) can."

And when the Post asked Yadav if Nepal's hopes of qualifying for the Super 8 was in trouble after the loss against England, he replied, "We have a good chance of qualifying for the Super 8. It was just our first match, and the net run rate was also not affected much."

Nepal have a good rest period before their second group-stage fixture. The Rhinos will face Italy on Thursday, with the match starting at 3pm local time.Nepal will then face another two-time T20 World Cup champion West Indies on February 15 and Scotland on February 17.

Big-hitting New Zealand get past Afghanistan

ASSOCIATED PRESS
CHENNAI, FEB 8

In the morning game at Chennai, Tim Seifert's 65 off 42 balls helped New Zealand get off to a winning start in the tournament and beat Afghanistan by five wickets in Group D.

It is expected to be the toughest group that also includes 2024 finalist South Africa. New Zealand cruised to 183-5 – its highest ever chase at the T20 World Cup – with two overs to spare. Afghanistan scored 182-6 after winning the toss.

Gulbadin Naib, batting at No. 3 for the first time in T20s since the 2024 World Cup when Afghanistan knocked out the Black Caps from the race to the semis with an 84-run win at Guyana, smashed 63 off 35 balls.

But opening batter Seifert (65) raised his maiden T20 World Cup half-century to overcome Mujeeb Ur Rahman's twin strike that had rattled New Zealand to 2-14 inside the first two overs.

Mujeeb clean bowled Finn Allen and Rachin Ravindra off successive balls before Glenn Phillips (42) dealt with the hat-trick ball and then put the chase back on track by putting on an aggressive 74-run partnership with Seifert.

Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan (1-36) also couldn't stem the flow of runs as New Zealand continued to accelerate in the middle overs against the experienced leg-spinner.

Rashid broke the stand in the 10th over when Phillips dragged it back onto his stumps.

Seifert completed his fifty in style by smacking off-spinner Mohammad Nabi for two successive sixes and followed it with a boundary before he was caught at deep square leg.

Mark Chapman (28 off 17 balls) and Daryl Mitchell (25 not out) then accelerated to get Black Caps home in the team's first game of the tournament.

Earlier, Naib struck four sixes and three boundaries and laid a platform for Afghanistan's strong finish with a 79-run partnership with Sediqullah Atal (29). Naib took his time, scoring 14 off 16 balls but needed only another 13 deliveries to raise his half-century as New Zealand struggled with its fifth bowler.

Express bowler Lockie Ferguson (2-40) had struck twice when he was introduced in the last over of the power play and removed both openers, Rahmanullah Gurbaz (27) and Ibrahim Zadran (10).

AP/RSS

New Zealand's Tim Seifert plays a shot during the T20 World Cup cricket match between Afghanistan and New Zealand in Chennai, India, on Sunday.

Lindsey Vonn, skiing's iron lady whose Olympic dream ended in tears

What was supposed to be Vonn's greatest comeback finished with her being stretchered into a helicopter after an awful crash in Sunday's downhill which dashed her medal hopes at the Milan-Cortina Olympics.

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
CORTINA D'AMPEZZO, ITALY, FEB 8

Lindsey Vonn's brave gamble for Olympic glory might have ended in horror for the US star, but she remains an icon of alpine skiing after a storied career filled with memorable highs and crushing setbacks.

What was supposed to be Vonn's greatest comeback finished with her being stretchered into a helicopter after an awful crash in Sunday's downhill which dashed her medal hopes at the Milan-Cortina Olympics.

Vonn was left screaming in agony after planting her face in the snow and hurtling like a rag doll down the Olimpia delle Tofane piste in Cortina d'Ampezzo, her skis still attached to her boots.

With the anterior cruciate ligament in her left knee already blown out before the Games and her other knee containing a titanium implant, Vonn's Olympic career looks over at 41 years old.

Should Sunday's crash be the final chapter in her career Vonn will retire for the second time as one of the major sporting figures of this century alongside the likes of her former boyfriend Tiger Woods.

Blessed with natural charm and charisma in a sport filled with strong characters, she has been on the cover of Time magazine and Sports Illustrated, bringing attention that made her instantly visible to a wider audience than winter sports enthusiasts.

That visibility, allied with charity work and a savvy social media presence, combined seamlessly with an enviable sporting prowess to bring her three Olympic medals—including one gold—eight world championship medals (two gold) and four overall World Cup overall titles.

She retired after the 2019 world championships in Are but made what she dubbed a "crazy" comeback last winter, aided by a partial titanium knee replacement in April 2024 dramatically changed her outlook.

It allowed her not only to return, pain-free, to competitive skiing after a six-year hiatus, but also to roll back the years, exceeding expectations by challenging—and sometimes besting—the top racers on the circuit.

'Chasing dreams'

Had she not ruptured her ACL at the last World Cup downhill ahead of the Olympics, in Crans Montana at the end of January, Vonn would have been a serious contender for gold in Cortina.

Vonn had finished on the podium in every previous downhill race this season, including two victories in St. Moritz and Zauchensee, the former making her the oldest ever World Cup race winner.

Only current teammate Mikaela Shiffrin, with 108, and ex-Swedish slalom specialist Ingemar Stenmark (86) have more World Cup wins than Vonn, who has racked up 84.

In a sport where personalities do not always loom large, Vonn has well and truly transcended that divide, even endearing herself to a large fanbase in the central European skiing hotbeds of Austria and Switzerland with her fluency in German.

In October she appeared on Time's cover, under the title "The Comeback"—a title which showed just how well she had been skiing in the lead-up to the Olympics.

> Vonn was left screaming in agony after planting her face in the snow.

"I'm still chasing dreams, still pushing limits, still believing in what's possible," she told the magazine.

"My hope is that anyone reading this remembers: never give up on yourself."

However, Vonn could potentially be forced to finally throw in the towel following the events of Sunday, which came on the piste where she has seen much success.

The first of her 12 victories in Cortina came in the downhill way back in January 2008. To give that some context, Sunday's silver medallist Emma Aicher was four years old at the time.

"I've been through a lot and this is another amazing chapter," said Vonn when she announced that she would compete at the Olympics, her fifth after debuting as a teenager in 2002.

"I don't know if it's the best chapter, but a pretty damn good comeback if I can pull it off." Pull it off she didn't, but the US ski team said after Sunday's crash that Vonn was "a #WinterOlympics legend, always".

"Your legacy runs forever with Team USA."

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Choose solitude or intimate interactions over large gatherings to find peace where it's been lacking. Your philosophical side emerges and helps you reclaim hope.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
Recognise if a desire for independence is preventing you from taking love seriously and whether or not there's a way to have the best of both worlds. Start by building up solid friendships.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
Avoid distractions by minding your own business and sticking to the plans you've laid out. If a trusted peer offers help or pitches an interesting deal, consider accepting the offer.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
You may struggle to distinguish yourself in a sea of faces, all fighting to make their own way. Be authentic to yourself, but recognise where more creativity or boldness is needed.

LEO (July 23-August 22)
It will be difficult to monitor your emotions as pressure builds. Though it's sometimes necessary to hide away and lick your wounds, defeat is not your colour.

VIRGO (August 23-September 22)
Boredom seeps in when life is predictable, causing you to operate on autopilot. Reflect on your goals and existing responsibilities through an innovative lens.

LIBRA (September 23-October 22)
You'll feel keenly aware of who has your back and who wants to knock you down. Though you'd rather focus on yourself than get involved with drama, it may be necessary to stand up to bullies.

SCORPIO (October 23-November 21)
Emotions build and trigger unpredictable behaviours, which may cause loved ones to lash out. Feeling blindsided by others could leave you at a crossroads, forcing you to make decisions you weren't intending to make.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22-December 21)
You may struggle to pay attention to details. The energy will be hectic, causing you to stumble if thoughts begin to drift. Just be mindful not to overcorrect by fixating on tasks that hold little importance.

CAPRICORN (December 22-January 19)
If you've been the subject of unkind whispers, invest more heavily in creative outlets and people who share your interests. Aligning with those who operate on a similar wavelength will provide reprieve from petty cliques.

AQUARIUS (January 20-February 18)
Attempts to assert your authority won't go over well. Rather than attempting to control external situations or the people around you, focus on supporting your own ambitions.

PISCES (February 19-March 20)
Flashes of inspiration strike with little notice. Even the brightest ideas could fall through the cracks if you fail to write them down. If you need a few moments to get your thoughts in order, find a quiet place.

ASTROLOGY.COM

CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Ready, willing and —
5 Vision-related
10 Reveal a secret
14 Wheedle
15 Actor Christopher —
16 Storm
17 Cousin to a wagon
18 Marsh bird
19 Is in the red
20 Gym employee
22 Additional serving
24 Nothing
25 Mire
26 Harsh laugh
29 Offered to buyers (2 wds.)
33 Beastly fellow
34 "— Free"
36 Fortune
37 Tattered cloth
38 "The Color of —"
39 Actress — Mendez
40 Rd.
41 Poker stake
42 Make merry
44 Berliner's nation
47 More profound
49 Plus
50 Clock numerals
51 Lover of country
55 Chinese medicinal root
59 Run —
60 Forfeits
62 Helen of —
63 Miami- — County
64 Sluggish
65 Perjurer
66 Gun pellets
67 Dressed to the —
68 Reverberate

DOWN
1 Bank statement no. (Abbr.)
2 Wild pig
3 Pasternak character
4 Existing no more
5 "1984" writer
6 Pome fruit
7 Actor — Danson
8 Currier's partner
9 Rite
10 Thinks gloomily
11 Grassy expanse
12 Old
13 "Porgy and —"
21 Athletic wear brand
23 Mongrel
26 Desire
27 Tool for boring
28 Black hardwood
29 Liberated
30 Aspirin alternative
31 Paramour
32 Abbr. in footnotes
33 Boast
35 Prov. in Canada
38 Stringed instrument
42 Check
43 Formal letter
45 Grocery store
46 Cuckoo
48 Has being
51 Walks with soft steps
52 Asian nursemaid
53 Fuss (Hyph.)
54 Actress — Collette
55 Actor Richard —
56 Actor — Stoltz
57 Ark builder
58 Greek sandwich
61 Upperclassman (Abbr.)

PREVIOUS PUZZLE SOLVED

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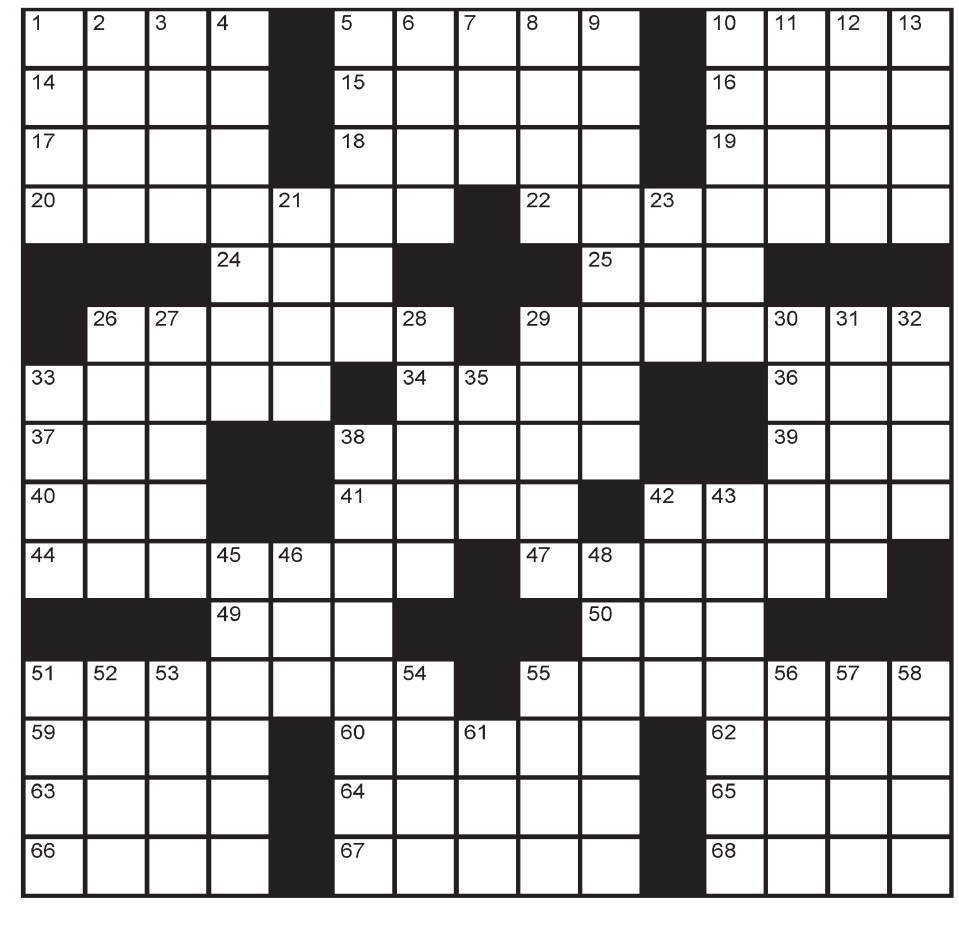

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8	4	1	6	2	5	7	9	3
6	1	4	8	7	2	5	3	9
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YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★☆☆☆☆

No.SC5921 Distribution: www.knightfeatures.com

This man teaches in a classroom with animals and Nepali ancestral tools

Founder of Tiger Lily Petting Farm Rajendra Upreti, a former biomedical inspector, teaches schoolchildren how traditional Nepali tools work—by letting children use them.

POST PHOTOS: MOKSHYADA THAPA

Upreti returned to Nepal after spending two decades in the US.

MOKSHYADA THAPA
KATHMANDU

Do you know what a dhiki does? Or have you ever used a janto to produce flour?

These traditional tools made people's daily chores easier before modern technologies were introduced. Today, we are rarely aware of their use. With the objective of teaching children about Nepal's traditional tools, the Tiger Lily Petting Farm and Hands-on Museum was built in March 2015.

It is located 2.5 kilometres away from the Araniko Highway in Suryabinayak-01. The museum has a quaint look, with large haystacks and dokos suspended from logs.

The owner, Rajendra Upreti, a biomedical device quality inspector by profession, returned to Nepal after spending two decades in the US. At first, he wanted to work with biomedical devices. But the market in Nepal was not as large as he had thought.

He then opted to start his own business at 53. Back in the US, in Ann Arbour, Michigan, on the opposite side of his residence, were a petting farm and a hands-on learning museum. "The museum had all sorts of displays of science-related devices; one was how a pulley could lift weights. Remembering this, I thought why not bring the concept of such a museum with a Nepali twist?" says Upreti.

Raised in Kavrepalanchok, he has always kept his childhood close to his heart. Over time, he noticed that memories and tools of the old way of life were slowly fading. Children were being taught what a janto does, but they could not understand its simple mechanism by reading textbooks alone.

This led him to propose learning through real-life experience. Like the devices he saw in the Michigan museum, Nepali traditional machines are also based on core scientific principles. The dhiki works on the lever principle, while the halo operates by distributing force. Demonstrating how these tools function sparks students' curiosity and helps them better understand the science behind them.

He built the Tiger Lily Museum to bridge curriculum and culture. The use of traditional tools that once made people's lives more convenient is disappearing in practice. Using and producing output from them requires additional effort, from their retrieval to their use. But preserving them in museums gives them life.

Inside the museum, the tools' showcase does not stop at a brief description of how they work. Visitors and students can actually put them to use.

For the dhiki, real grains are placed at the bottom of the pestle, and a vertical wooden cylinder is attached to the end of the lever. Students can place their foot on the opposite end of the lever to raise and lower the pestle, pounding the grain.

Another interesting tool is theki and madani, used for butter churning. The theki is a cylindrical wooden flask used to store curd, and the madani is rotated back and forth by a rope. After some time, butter (nauni) is produced. The remaining water, also called mohi, is served as a drink. When The Post reached Tiger Lily, students from a visiting school were waiting in lines to drink the mohi, a product of their own labour.

"Once, the animals and birds kept on this petting farm were commonly raised in households. Now, children don't interact with these animals as much as we used to. When I was a kid, I remember sitting on top of a bull and holding its horns with all my strength," says Upreti, laughing.

Watching children experience the warmth and joy of petting animals brings him deep contentment.

Rice pounder: (Dhikki)
An abandoned rice pounder made of wood in rural Cambodia. A rice pounder is an agricultural tool made from a simple machine and commonly used in Southeast Asia to dehull rice or to turn rice into rice flour. Rice is dehulled by continually raising and then dropping the heavy head or pestle of the pounder into a block or mortar. The head is raised by standing on the handle of the device past its fulcrum (similar to a see-saw). Once raised, the user quickly removes themselves from the handle to allow the heavy head to fall into the mortar and pulverize its contents.[1] This is in contrast to a previous method of rice dehulling that involved directly lifting, and using a large heavy, loose pestle directly on rice. Later more complex mechanical dehuskers or rice hullers powered by gas engines or electricity have replaced many rice pounders.

In the museum, you not only get a brief description of how the tools work. Visitors can actually put them to use.

The horse at this place has its own personality. Basanti refuses to entertain anyone unless she is given a piece of carrot.

WHY DO IT

Along with the usual cattle and birds, there are some exotic species on the farm. Guineafowl (laukat in Nepali), kalij pheasants, and parrot species such as budgies and finches are found on the farm.

The horse at this place has its own personality. Basanti refuses to entertain anyone unless she is given a piece of carrot.

At the edge of the museum lies a hydroelectric power generator—built as a conventional model to explain the basics of hydroelectricity generation. "Hands-on learning leaves an impact on small minds. Children remember what they did on their own rather than learning from textbooks. Even though the materials I teach children about are on the verge of extinction, I hope they grow into a generation that cherishes and preserves our traditional values."

In addition to educational content, the museum offers entertainment elements. One of them is a tractor ride that takes children through the area.

To date, more than 350,000 students from across Kathmandu have visited the Farm. "Per day, our farm can only give tours to 170 children; any number above that is beyond our working limit. This way we can emphasise providing individual time to each and every student so they actually learn, not just get a mere view of our museum," says Upreti.

In other countries, governments provide tax incentives to businesses that help conserve national culture and traditions. Upreti notes that Nepal's government has yet to introduce similar measures. He believes that, with support from government bodies, businesses whose objectives align with his could positively influence many people.

Scan the code for a related video

Mental health groups conduct scream therapy at Marble Dada

The hour-long session aimed to familiarise the public with alternative therapy methods while creating a safe space for emotional release.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF PRANIL SHAKYA

POST REPORT
KATHMANDU

Mental health organisations Happy Minds and Project Loud conducted a scream therapy session at Marble Dada, Godawari, on Saturday, introducing participants to an unconventional stress-release technique.

The hour-long session, which began at 9:00 am, aimed to familiarise the public with alternative therapy methods while providing participants an opportunity to release pent-up emotional pain and stress through guided screaming exercises.

Screaming can help release difficult emotions, foster a sense of community and empowerment, and release both helpful and detrimental hormones. This therapy is best practised with the guidance of a mental health professional.

On Saturday morning, facilitators began the session with vocal warm-ups. Following the warm-ups, each participant took turns screaming individually, with the entire group screaming in response, a symbolic practice to acknowledge and validate each person's pain and distress.

The session progressed to positive affirmations and primal screaming, techniques intended to help participants release their emotional burdens.

"Therapy doesn't have to be confined to four walls," Shreeya Giri, the founder and managing director of Happy Minds, said. "Nepal needs more innovative spaces for venting, sharing, and healing."

Similarly, one of the facilitators of the session, Bhawishya Limbu, said, "Watching isolation dissolve into collective release was powerful. When people felt their voices were welcomed, a sense of belonging emerged, and strangers became a support system."

"I got to meet so many wonderful people," said Sharmila Adhikari, a participant in the session. "This was my first time trying therapy, and it made me feel good. I was able to let go of a lot of things, and I felt so much lighter afterwards."

Scan the code for a related video

Mariah Carey's Olympic act prompts questions about possible lip-syncing

Her performance also prompted criticism online, where commenters were confused as to why an Italian singer wasn't given the honour.

STEFANIE DAZIO
MILAN

The performance by pop star Mariah Carey at the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics opening ceremony was the talk of the town—but it also raised a few questions.

The rendition by the American singer of Italian classic "Nel Blu Dipinto di Blu"—better known as "Volare"—was a showstopping highlight in the 3½-hour spectacle that kicked off the Games.

"Such a dream come true to perform (in Italian!) at the Milano Cortina 2026 Olympic Winter Games Opening Ceremony," she later wrote in an Instagram post.

She received rave reviews from many, who called her marvellous and touted her high notes.

But her performance Friday also prompted a good deal of criticism online, where commenters were confused why an Italian singer wasn't given the honor. Some noted a large teleprompter with a phonetic breakdown of the song's Italian lyrics, while others wondered if she was lip-syncing.

Three reporters—including The Associated Press—asked the International Olympic Committee and local organisers about her during their daily news conference Saturday to address the teleprompter and doubts about lip-syncing.

Non-Italian background

Carey was born in New York to an Irish American mother, who was an opera singer, and a Black father with Venezuelan roots.

Despite her non-Italian background, the local organising committee asked her to perform at Friday's opening ceremony and touted her for months as a big get to open the Winter Games.

"We believe that Mariah Carey's performance was exceptional," Milan Cortina's director of ceremonies Maria Laura Iascone said Saturday. "She was capable of creating a magic moment."

It's unclear whether Carey chose to sing "Volare," but she told Vogue after the ceremony that the song has long been a favourite of hers.

AP/RSS

The show did feature the Italian voices of tenor Andrea Bocelli, singer-songwriter Laura Pausini and mezzosoprano Cecilia Bartoli.

Lip-syncing questions

While armchair analysts mused online that the "All I Want for Christmas is You" singer appeared stiff, especially while singing in Italian, the crowd inside the San Siro stadium cheered and applauded when they realised she was performing in the local language.

She later stunned the audience with her own "Nothing is Impossible."

Asked Saturday if Carey was lip-syncing, Iascone dodged the question and instead praised her as "really extraordinary."

She said that "in order to be on the safe side," they always record performances ahead of time for internationally broadcast events.

She didn't directly address if Carey was lip-syncing and said the singer wasn't paid for her performance.

"We were all satisfied with the result we had," she said.

Phonetic teleprompter

A large teleprompter was visible inside the stadium, spelling out phonetically how Carey should sing the Italian words.

"Voh-lah-reh," it read for "Volare." And "Nell blue Dee-peen-toe D blue" for "Nel Blu Dipinto di Blu."

Posts of the scrolling lyrics on social media, including from Italian high jumper Gianmarco Tamberi, racked up hundreds of thousands of views online.

When the AP asked Iascone about it, she said "of course" there was a teleprompter.

"Especially for those artists who sang in a different language than their own native language," she said. "And they needed some support, especially regarding the pronunciation."

Iascone added: "This is part of the show. It is a way to support the talents on the stage."

– Associated Press

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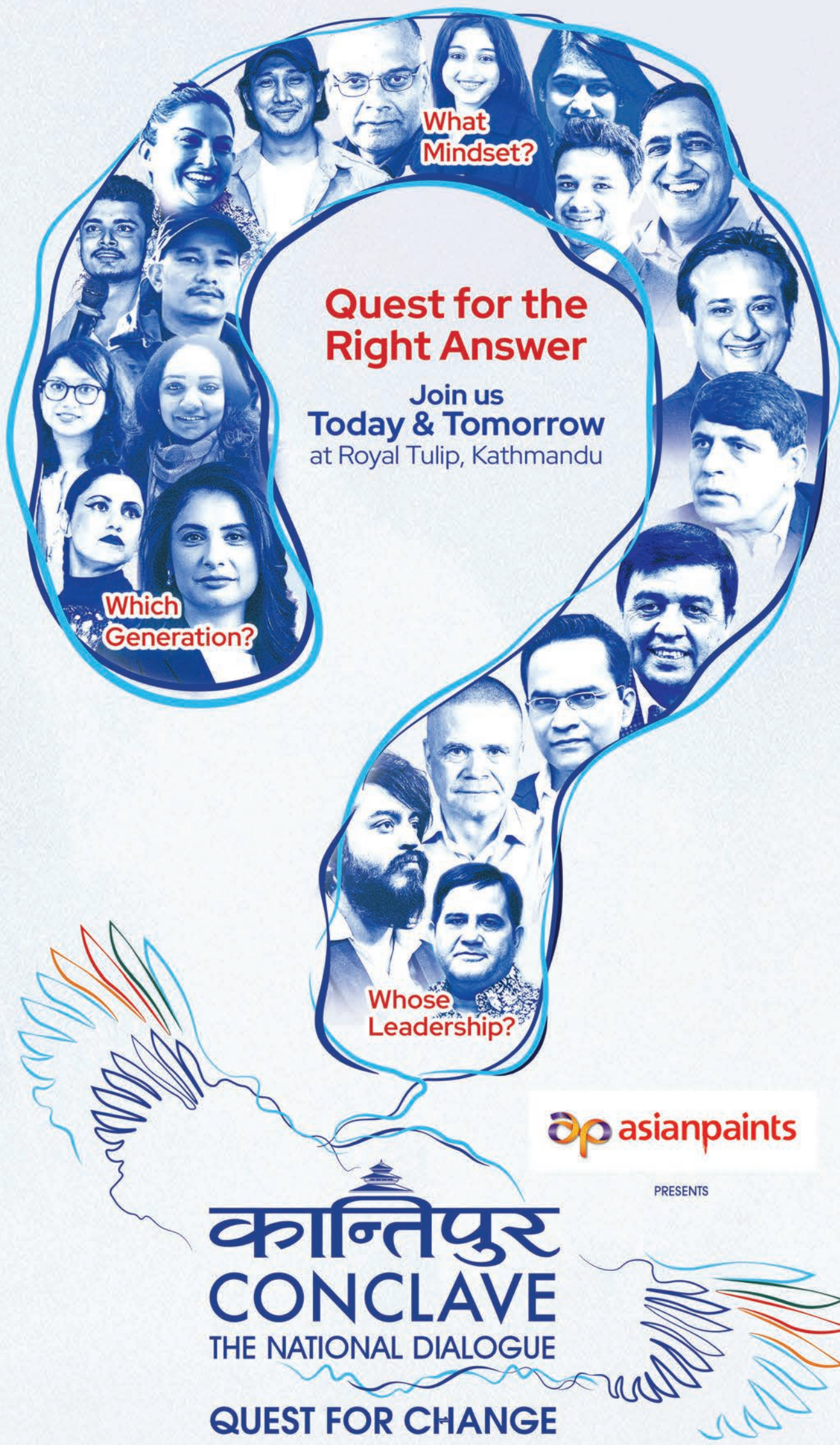

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SPEAKERS TODAY

(9th FEBRUARY 2026, MONDAY)

Keynote Speaker

Dr. Shirin Ebadi
Writer, Jurist,
Nobel Laureate
10:00 - 10:45 AM

Session 1

10:45 AM - 12:00 PM

From Protests to Possibilities

PANELISTS

Emel Mathlouthi
Tunisian-American,
Singer-Songwriter
The Voice of the Arab Spring

Kamanthi Wickramasinghe
Senior Journalist,
Daily Mirror, Sri Lanka

Marzana Mahnaz
Research Associate,
Center of Governance Studies,
Bangladesh

MODERATOR

Tanuja Pandey
Gen Z Activist,
Nepal

Biswas Baral
Editor,
The Kathmandu Post

Session 2

12:00 - 12:30 PM

Gen Z Revolt : Story of a Shoe

Prakash Bohara
Gen Z Revolt Injured

Session 3

12:30 - 1:15 PM

Revisiting Nepal's Revolutions

CK Lal
Political Analyst

Session 4

2:00 - 3:00 PM

What's Funny about Politics? In Nepal, Almost Everything

PANELISTS

Adarsha Mishra
Comedian

Sita Neupane
Comedian

Prabhat Lama
Comedian

MODERATOR

Sundar Khanal
Comedian

Manoj Gajurel
Comedian

Session 5

3:00 - 4:00 PM

The End of Ideology?: Retrofitting of Nepali Politics

CONVERSATION

Hari Sharma
Political Scientist

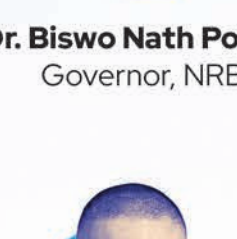
Ghanashyam Bhushal
Politician

Session 6

4:00 - 5:15 PM

Rebuilding Economy, Restoring Confidence

PANELISTS



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